

Family Archipelago models in rural Nicaragua

Characteristics, dynamics, and perspectives

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*From New Country-to-City Linkages to "Archipelago Models":
a Way of Adaptation to the Challenges of an Embedded Rurality*

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Outline of the presentation

1. Context and problematic
2. Framework and methods
3. Results
4. Discussion
5. Conclusion

Context and problematic

- ▶ Nicaragua has historically been characterized by important out-migration
 - In the early XXth. thousands of people migrated, essentially to Costa Rica (agro-industry: banana, coffee, cotton, etc. and mines)
 - In the 1970s: 2% of the Nicaraguan population live abroad
 - In the 1970s–80s, about 280,000 people left the country due to political, social, environmental, and military issues related to natural catastrophes, Sandinista Revolution, and civil war
 - A third and on-going migratory wave, initiated in the 1990s, is characterized by new trends
 - Major changes in mobility patterns in terms of characteristics, intensity, direction, and incidence of migration
 - In relation with major economic changes (liberalization) and its consequences on labor markets, and demographic transition (dividend)

Context and problematic

- ▶ Currently, about 17% of the population have migrated
 - Mainly to Costa Rica (500,000), and the USA (x10 since 2000)
 - Mostly from rural areas and non permanent, and characterized by better (than the average) education level, young ages, a significant participation of women, and important incidence at both origin and destination level
 - Ex. Remittances represents US\$1,000 millions per year = 15–20% of GDP
- ▶ However, despite its importance in rural areas, little is known on the functioning of migration for rural families
 - Who migrate? How mobility participates in reorganizing the observed multi-spatial strategies of families? What are the perspectives?
- ▶ Our communication proposes to analyze rural migration through the analytical prism of family archipelago to answer these questions

Framework and methods

- ▶ Social scientists have studied the movement of labor out of rural areas for a long time
- ▶ In the 1990s, new approaches emerged theorizing “*transnational migrations*” (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Smith, 1994 ; Pries 1997 ; Portes, 1999) and “*family archipelago models*” (Bonnemaison, 1996 ; Veltz, 1996 ; Leonard et al., 2004; Quesnel y del Rey, 2005; Del Rey & Quesnel, 2009; Cortes 2011)
- ▶ The concept of “*archipelago family*” is defined by
 - a criteria of spatial dispersion of family members
 - combined with the acknowledgement of the maintaining of social relations and linkages with the origin
 - => circulation of transfers (material and non material), and articulation at family level

Framework and methods

- ▶ Six study cases from two research projects are analyzed to better understand archipelago models
 - The major characteristics of rural migration
 - Statistical analysis of a 450 HHs surveys (2008) in 5 rural areas (7,982 persons and 371 migrants)*
 - The socio-economic functioning of migration within family strategies
 - In depth qualitative analysis along a diachronic dimension of 40 life narratives (at family and individual level) in another rural area**
- ▶ Combination of approaches: micro-economics, social geography, and ethno-sociology

* *RuralStruc*: 5 years research program (2006–2010) funded by French cooperation, World Bank and IFAD and implemented by Instituto Nitpalan in Nicaragua

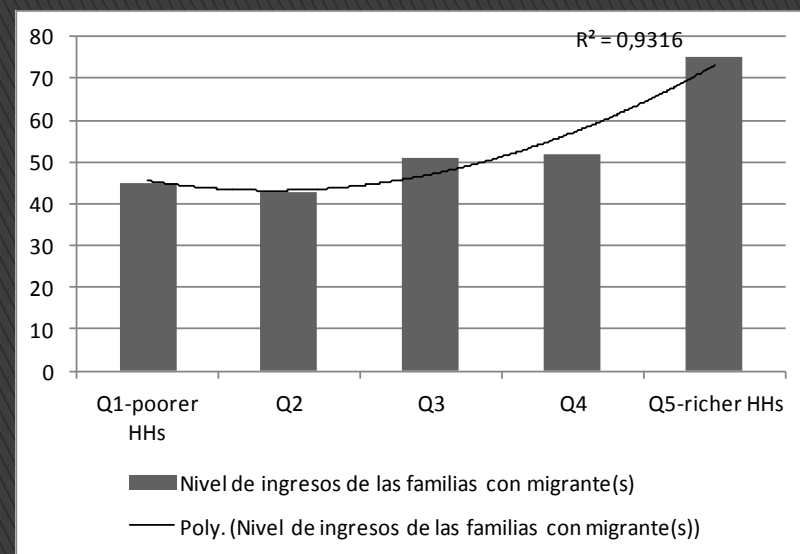
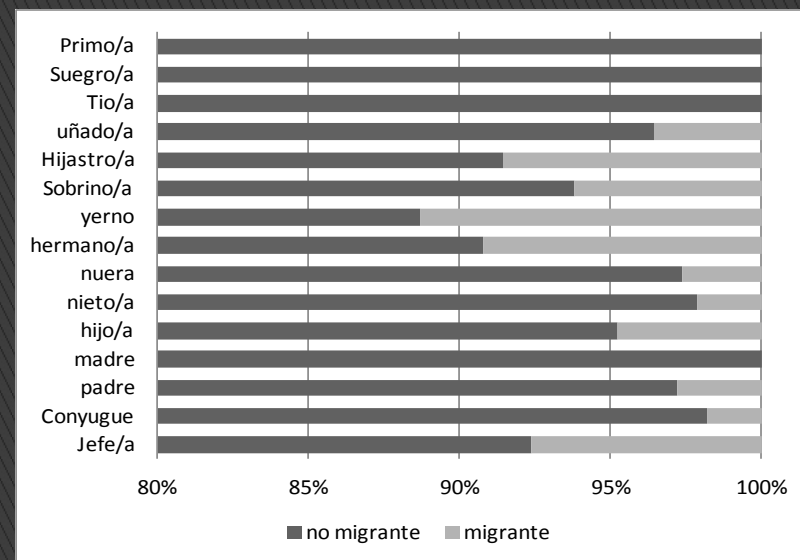
** Project '*Movilidad y Sociedades rurales en Nicaragua*': One year pilot research initiative funded by CIRAD and implemented by CIRAD/Insituto Nitlapan

Rural migration characteristics

- ▶ 18% of rural families counts at least one migrant
 - Inter-regional variations depending on wealth, remoteness and agro-ecological conditions at the origin
 - Migrate to Central America (Costa Rica: 35%), and the USA (7%)
- ▶ Migrants are mostly basically educated, young active males
 - 95% are between 15–64, 68% are between 15 y 35
 - 41% have primary education, 20% pre-school, 4% university
 - => low level of education, but higher than the national average
 - 71% are men
- ▶ The majority of migrants (68%) work at origin in agriculture, and at destination in various sectors, generally in non qualified jobs
 - Agriculture (38%), services (32%), and construction (16%)

Rural migration characteristics

- ▶ Rural migration is associated with a inter-generational and inter-conjugal dispersion
 - 52% are sons/daughters, 4% are grand-sons/daughters
 - 30% are chief of family, and 6% are partner
- ▶ The better-off migrate more than the worse-off
=> existence of barriers to entry
- ▶ However, to understand family and individual logics and dynamics, a diachronic approach is needed at family level
=> archipelago model



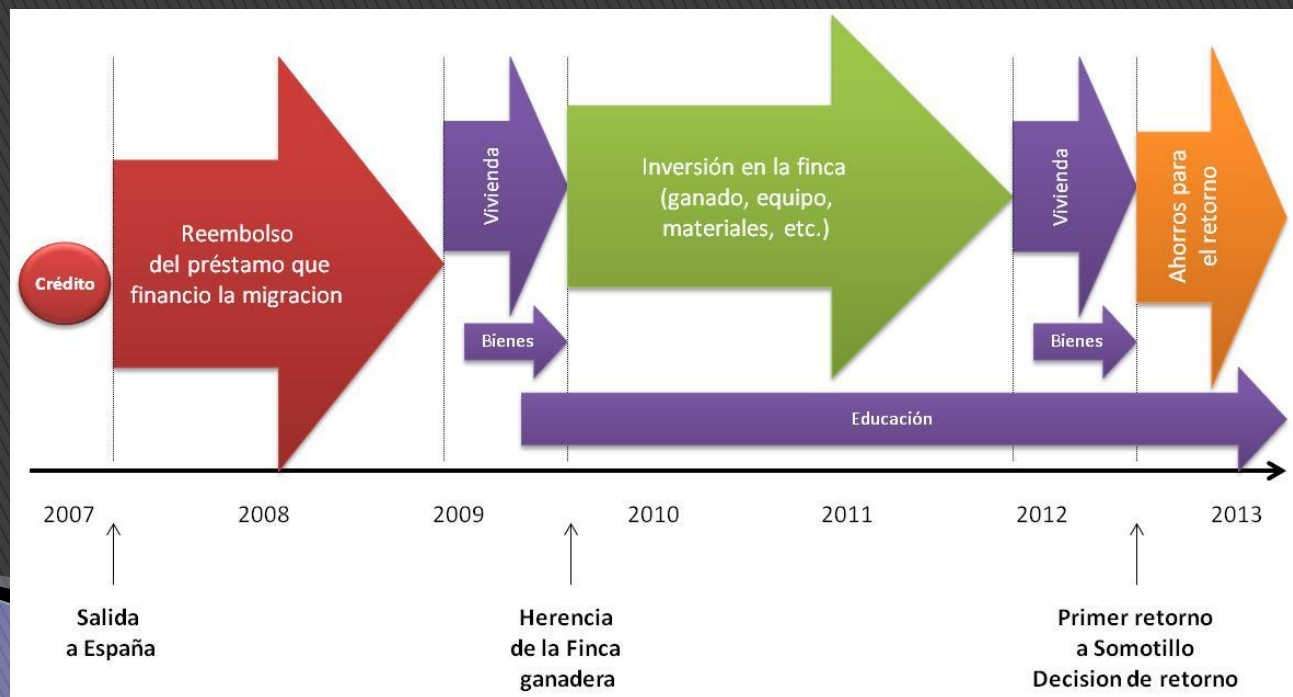
Dispersion, circulation, and articulation at family level

- ▶ Spatial dispersion and articulation of activities
 - Ex. of short term temporal migration to Costa Rica: articulating a trans-national agro-migratory cycle
 - => 3-4 months of seasonal agricultural work in Costa Rica allow to fund 6-8 months of family basic grain cultivation on 9 to 12 ha



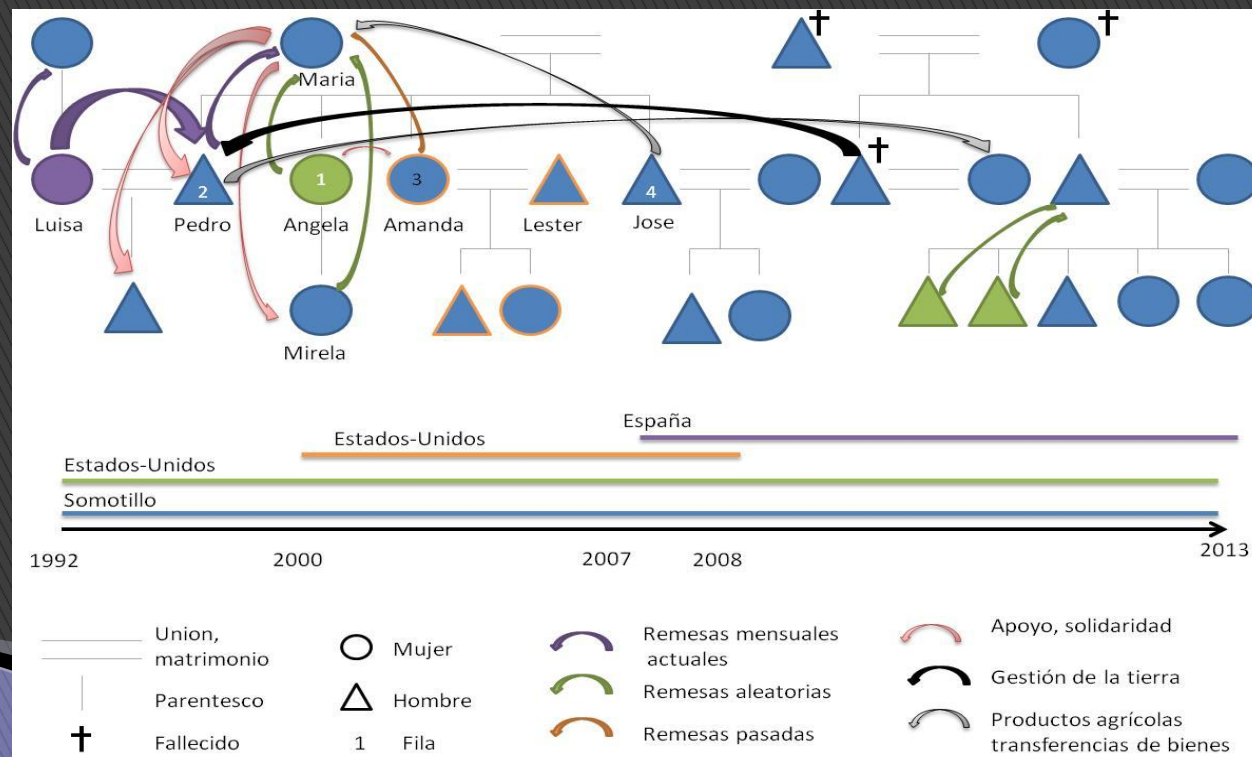
Dispersion, circulation, and articulation at family level

- ▶ Conjugal dispersion and circulation of transfers evolving over time
 - Ex. of middle-term Europe/US migration: local economic strategies at nuclear family level, between productive inversion and consumption, thanks to remittances



Dispersion, circulation, and articulation at family level

- ▶ Inter-generational dispersion and social articulation
 - Ex. of long-term long-distance migrations' extended family enterprise => complex transfers and social reproduction



Perspectives and constraints

- ▶ Archipelago models reflect adaptation strategies to the demo-socio-economic context
 - Demographic transition and growing labor force
 - For a population of 5.8–6.2 million, it represents 3.5–3.9 millions people in working age and 120–125,000 youth are entering each year in the labor market
 - Labor market characteristics
 - Labor market participation = 75%, unemployment = 6.3%
 - 23% of working people are in the formal sector
 - In rural areas, 44% of the population is under-employed, with high level of job insecurity (35% receive a regular salary)
- ▶ Archipelago models offer accumulation possibilities that were not thinkable locally
 - Migrations have become key element for social reproduction
 - In average, remittance accounts for 75 USD per month (median 44 USD, max 650 USD) when local monthly salaries vary between 95 USD in agriculture, 210 USD in manufactures, up to 580 USD in financial services

Perspectives and constraints

- ▶ However, archipelago models have their limitations that question their sustainability
 - Evolving demand of labor abroad in a context of global crisis that affect all labor markets
 - => increasing competition between poor non qualified work force
 - Existing major risks of rupture in the model
 - Family cohesion and circulation: permanent installation abroad and progressive withdrawal of the migrant in family articulation, children rejecting their origin and refusing to keep linkages, violence during migration
 - Brain drain / brain gain: not all transfers allow a virtuous circle of development and danger that remittances may compete with rural production and slow economic expansion

Conclusion: adaptation or time-bomb?

- ▶ Migration, based on the construction of complex strategies at family level, is a major feature of current rural reality in Nicaragua
- ▶ These strategies of “leaving to remaining” cannot be understood without bringing together elements of migration history, family cycle, and productive organization
 - Family logics and dynamics in time, functioning of dispersion, circulation, and articulation
 - => understanding of the anchoring of rural families in evolving economies
- ▶ However, even if archipelago models have proved their efficiency and resilience over time, they can also become a time-bomb
 - High dependence on foreign labor markets and social linkages that can quickly evolve due to migration itself

Thank you
for your attention